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THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS

The fourth volume of the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*¹ is particularly rich in articles dealing with folklore and folk-customs. One has only to mention such topics as: crimes, punishments, disease, demons, cosmogony, cursing, divination, death and the disposal of the dead, to suggest the wealth of material at the disposal of those who are interested in the non-theological aspects of religion. Indeed, so voluminous are many of these articles as to be, in effect, volumes. Thus, the article on "Cosmogony and Cosmology" covers fifty-five double-column pages; that on "Crimes and Punishments," fifty-seven; "Demons and Spirits," seventy; "Death and the Disposal of the Dead," one hundred. As compared with these elaborate articles those dealing with particular Christian matters like the covenant theology—an admirable, succinct, and yet exhaustive article by William Adams Brown—seem short, but the relative proportion of space assigned to these two types of articles will certainly serve to give the reader a new sense of the fact that Christianity is only one among the religions of the world. If it is to be, as we believe, supreme, the reasons also are to be seen in the material which this volume sets forth. No stronger presentation could be made of the restraint and misery caused by the superstitions of unethical and primitive religions than appears in these articles.

The scope of the editorial plan is again admirable. Thus, in the great article on "Death and the Disposal of the Dead," we have first a general introduction treating comparatively twenty-two different groups of primitive customs. The danger in such a treatment is, of course, obvious. It is like that which beset the old atomistic systematic theology. Customs of widely separated people, like widely separated texts, are brought together for the purpose of generalization. But in this particular treatment the wealth of illustrative material is so great, and the general statements are so carefully made, as to avoid many of the distortions to which a less restrained generalization might lead. Further, this danger is avoided by a series of specific articles on the most important civilizations. How far, or rather how little, some of these civilizations have passed from the primitive customs, these papers make only too evident. Here one can see also, that, notwithstanding the persistence of non-Christian superstitious elements among Christians, Christian customs themselves are largely free from oppressive superstitions. It should be added that these discussions of various ethnic

¹ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Edited by James Hastings. Vol. IV, Confirmation-Drama. New York: Scribner, 1912. xvi+970 pages.

customs are admirably reinforced by descriptions of specific customs and generous references to literature. As original and valuable as any in this particular field is the article on the Japanese methods of caring for the dead. The material which Arthur Lloyd puts at the disposal of the readers was greatly needed and is admirably organized.

The treatment of the subject of demons and spirits is the same as that in the above article, a general introduction on primitive beliefs leading up to specific discussions of the various ethnic beliefs. There is in this article much curious information likely to prove surprising to those who have never looked with care into the subject of demonology. Here again the comparative treatment enables the student of Christianity to discover just the perspective in which the New Testament demonology is to be viewed. The article by Professor Barton on the Hebrew demonology is particularly valuable in that it traces the later conceptions down across the apocalyptic literature. The demonology of Rabbinism does not seem to be very fully treated by Herbert Loewe. Rabbinism after it has reached its way into a popular religion seems never to have been thoroughly investigated. Professor Jackson's treatment of the Persian demonology is greatly compressed and could have been improved by illustrative material.

The value of comparative study is unexpectedly shown in the group of articles on the "Descent to Hades." The Christian belief is discussed with characteristic precision and completeness by Professor Loofs, but the article by Dr. MacCulloch on "Kindred Beliefs in Other Religions" serves as an admirable background. One might add that Dr. MacCulloch's article on "Cross-Roads" is an interesting discussion of a curious element of folk-belief.

The volume abounds in material of the utmost importance to the student of religion. Simply to glance through its pages is educational, but the careful reading of any of the articles discovers a quality of scholarship and a balance of treatment which is exceptional even in these days of encyclopedia-making. Even the articles on more familiar subjects like "Creeds" and "Deism" are written from a point of view and with a breadth of treatment which give each subject new vitality.

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WERNLE'S INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGICAL STUDY

Few books in recent years have been so full of interest as Professor Wernle's attempt to write a modern equivalent for the theological encyclopedia of former times. In this attempt he assumes the point